



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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About this newsletter

Local Government and ABS is a quarterly newsletter created by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) aimed at helping the Local Government Sector use statistics to assist with planning and other community servicing decisions.

The specific aims of this newsletter are to:

- Help you easily find information on the ABS website and explain the structure of the ABS website;
- Provide direct electronic links to statistical series of use to local government. Electronic links are coloured and underlined and can be activated using the mouse button;
- Explain statistical terms to help make sense of more complex data;
- Provide a central contact point where you can provide your views and suggestions as to how the ABS can better assist local government.

This is a free newsletter and we encourage you to forward it to others and post it on your bulletin board. Anyone is welcome to receive Local Government and ABS.

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To find this newsletter on the ABS Website:

- Select **News and Media** from the main menu at the top or bottom of the screen.
- At the next page choose **ABS Newsletters**.
- Then choose the appropriate edition under **Local Government and ABS**.

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Recent analysis of women's employment in urban, rural and regional Australia

To assist in the comparison of patterns of women's employment across selected regions of Australia, the ABS has recently released analysis of data from the 2001 Population Census.

For the purposes of this analysis, the following geographic categories were used to compare women's employment patterns in urban and rural areas:

- Major urban - urban centres with a population exceeding 100,000 persons,
- Medium townships-towns and urban centres with a population in the range of 20,000 to 99,999 persons,
- Small townships - towns and urban centres with a population in the range of 1,000 to 19,999 persons, and
- Rural areas - the remainder of Australia which includes towns with a population in the range 200 to 999 persons.

The major results are:

- Women in Major urban areas are more likely to have higher educational qualifications, have the highest labour force participation rate, are least likely to be self-employed, and are less likely to be working part-time.
- Women in Rural areas are least likely to be unemployed, and most likely to be self-employed, with almost half working in agriculture.

Specifically:-

- In 2001, the labour force participation rate for women aged 15-64 years in Australia was 65.3%, compared to 80.4% for men.
- Small townships had the lowest labour force participation rate for women (61.1%), compared with 66.6% in Major urban centres
- Between 1991 and 2001 female labour force participation rates increased in each of the four broad geographical regions.
- The unemployment rate for women aged 15-64 years across Australia was 6.7% in 2001, which was 1.4 percentage points lower than the rate for men similarly aged (8.1%).
- Highest rates of female unemployment were observed in Medium townships (8.2%) and Small townships (7.8%), compared to 5.8% in Rural areas.
- Small townships had the highest proportion of part-time employed women (54.3%) compared with 51.9% in Rural areas and 46.5% in Major urban centres.
- In each of the four areas defined in this report, Retail trade and Health and community services were the main industries in which women aged 15-64 years worked.
- The proportion of self-employed women in Rural areas (25.3%) in 2001 was more than double the proportion in Major urban centres (10.2%).
- One quarter of employed women aged 15-64 years in Major urban centres had a University degree compared with around 17% for both Medium townships and Rural areas and 15.7% in Small townships.

The **main features** of this analysis are available free of charge.

Alternatively, the report

Perspectives on Regional Australia - Women's Employment in Urban, Rural and Regional Australia can be purchased on-line by selecting catalogue number **1380.0.55.001** from the list of available publications.

For more information, contact Mark Nowosilskyj by phone on (08) 8237 7358 or by email : mark.now@abs.gov.au

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Improvements in regional labour force data

The ABS has recently improved the quality of regional estimates of labour force status (numbers employed, numbers unemployed, total labour force, unemployment rate).

Regional estimates of labour force status are available on a monthly basis for 77 Labour Force Survey (LFS) regions. The LFS regions were established to meet user interest for small area data from the Labour Force Survey, and data for these regions is available back to October 1982.

LFS estimates of employed, unemployed and not in the labour force are calculated to add up to independent estimates (or benchmarks) of the usually resident civilian population aged 15 years and over.

Before the February 2004 survey, population benchmarks in the LFS were classified by state/territory of usual residence, capital city/rest of state, age and sex. In addition to these benchmarks, from February 2004 the Labour Force Survey uses population benchmarks for LFS regions by sex. LFS estimates at the region level were revised back to January 1999 with the release of the February 2004 data. This has improved the quality of estimates for LFS regions, without compromising the quality of the estimates at national, state and territory levels.

Maps of the LFS regions are available and can be accessed from the **Labour theme page**.

Government and other organisations use labour market data for LFS regions to monitor the level of regional activity, assess regional development issues, and to inform the development of employment policies and programs. Some agencies are interested in the broad trends for regions as part of assessing the state's economic performance.

Data for LFS regions is discussed in the feature article **Labour Force Survey Regions** which was included in the July 2004 edition of Australian Labour Market Statistics, Australia (Cat no. 6105.0).

For more information, contact Peter Bradbury by phone on (02) 6252 6565 or by email : peter.bradbury@abs.gov.au

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Proposed output strategy for 2006 Census of Population and Housing

The ABS has recently released a paper informing users of the proposed strategies for 2006 census products and services, and to seek their views on them.

With the development of technology, in particular the Internet, and the growing sophistication of the user community, the ABS intends to recast its range of products and services for the 2006 census. In particular :

- Most electronic products (including CDATE 2006) will only be available via the Internet;
- A range of new Internet based products will be developed which will make it easier for users of varying degrees of sophistication to get the data they need;
- The range of census publications will be reduced;
- The range of data that will be made available as standard census output will be expanded;
- All the profile tables that were released in 2001 will be made available in 2006;

For further information about the proposed strategy and details of how you can provide your views, please see the **Information Paper**:

Census of Population and Housing ABS Views on Census Output Strategy 2006 (Cat no. 2009.0) which is available for free.

Based upon the results of this consultation, the ABS will develop specific proposals for the 2006 Census Output program, including the development of prototypes for 2006 census products and services. Details of these prototypes will be circulated for comment in mid 2005.

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Do you need help with designing or conducting a collection or using statistical products?

If this sounds like you, then the **handbook of the National Statistical Service (NSS)** may help. The NSS handbook can also be accessed from the homepage of the **NSS website**.

This handbook outlines the issues that need to be addressed when:

- conducting a statistical collection,
- extracting data from administrative systems,
- managing statistical data,
- turning administrative or survey data into statistics and their subsequent analysis.

This handbook is a reference guide, providing a broad overview of the statistical process. It is arranged in chapters that introduce a different aspect of the statistical cycle.

The handbook also includes:

- appropriate references to more advanced sources of information;
- appendices that provide further information;
- a glossary to explain terms that are used.

This is a summary of the structure of the handbook:

Chapters

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Initiating the Statistical Activity

Chapter 3 Designing the Statistical Activity

Chapter 4 Data Collection and Data Extraction

Chapter 5 Data Processing

Chapter 6 Statistical Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter 7 Dissemination of Statistics

Chapter 8 Evaluating the Statistical Activity

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Phases of the Statistical Cycle

Appendix 2 - Data Management

Appendix 3 - Standards and Classifications

Appendix 4 - Confidentiality and Privacy

Appendix 5 - Information Development Plans

Appendix 6 - Statistical Skills

Appendix 7 - Quality Declaration and Assessment

Appendix 8 - Project Management

Glossary

For more information contact Rex Porter by phone on (08) 8237 7416 or by email: rex.porter@abs.gov.au
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What's happening in Local Government Finance?

Collections

Electronic forms for the annual data collection, conducted cooperatively by the ABS and the Department of Local Government and/or Local Government Grants Commission in each state, have now been dispatched for all jurisdictions. Whilst return dates are different in each state, data for the earlier states have started to be received by the ABS via the Department of Local Government and/or Grants Commission.

The main focus of the Local Government Statistics Unit (LGSU) over the next few months will be processing the data received in time for use in the ABS National Accounts. Given the tight deadlines involved, the LGSU encourages all councils to return their forms to their respective Department of Local Government/ Grants Commission at the earliest possible time, but at latest by the respective due dates on the form. To assist in the quality assurance processes the LGSU performs on the data, the ABS would also encourage all councils to complete the relevant comments section of the form to report any unusual activity which has occurred.

Other than use in the National Accounts, the data are also used by various researchers/organisations for research/policy work and are generally available on request.

The LGSU has completed the survey of financial information for the September quarter cycle. The LGSU was able to reduce the form by some 87 data items per council per quarter. Along with this, as a result of implementing a new collection methodology, the unit has implemented a system to rotate most councils in and out of the survey, thus reducing the burden which may be placed on councils who had previously always been in the survey. Some 49 councils which had previously always been selected were able to be rotated out of the sample with a new selection of councils rotated in. It is expected that most councils (other than the particularly large councils around the country) will only stay in the survey for a maximum of two years. This is one issue in step with the overall strategy of the LGSU to manage the burden the ABS places on councils in our request for data.

The data from the quarterly collection are also used by the ABS in the compilation of Australia's quarterly National Accounts.

Other Developments

The LGSU has been meeting with a number of local government related bodies in recent times. The LGSU has met with representatives of the Australian Local Government Association and the Local Government Association of Queensland relating to a number of projects aimed at improving coordination of the collection of data from councils.

Starting in January 2005, the LGSU will commence investigations to determine what data are available for the Local Government sector. The project will involve preliminary investigation and description of ABS and non-ABS sources of data in the field of Local Government statistics. This will assist in the development of a Local Government Information Development Plan (IDP).

An IDP is an agreement, developed as a collaborative effort between key stakeholders, that defines the suite of information required to support policy in a particular field of statistics. IDPs aim to obtain agreement between key stakeholders about areas where further development/coordination is needed in a field of statistics. Long term, the aim of establishing an IDP is to improve the quality, coverage and use of statistics within a particular field of statistics.

More information about IDPs can be found in **Appendix 5** of the **handbook of the National Statistics Service**. There is an article on the handbook earlier in this newsletter.

Contacts

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Newsletter contact details

This newsletter is one way to help improve communication between the ABS and the Local Government Sector. New ABS initiatives to assist local government organisations will be announced in this newsletter as they evolve. We would like your views and suggestions about this newsletter so that it remains useful and assists you to understand and use ABS statistics. Please email comments to rex.porter@abs.gov.au, or by telephone on (08) 8237 7416.

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